

The Four Noble Truths

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Brothers and sisters, I am extremely happy to be here with you and have the opportunity to explain about the Four Noble Truths. The Four Noble Truths as you know are the basic Buddhist teaching, the foundation. In fact without understanding the Four Noble Truths and without experience drawn from this teaching then it is impossible to practice Buddhadharma. Therefore I am extremely happy.

At the same time it is my belief that the major world religions also have the great potential to serve humanity. This means to produce good human beings, nice human beings. Good and nice does not mean a pretty face but a good heart, a compassionate heart. All the major religions have this kind of potential. This is quite clear. Therefore I usually always advising people that it is better to follow one's own traditional religion.

Those people who really feel that their traditional religion is not very effective and for some radical atheists then the Buddhist explanation may have some attraction. It is better for people to have some kind of religious training rather than radical or extreme atheism. For those individuals who feel a true attraction to the Buddhist approach, the Buddhist training of mind, in that situation it is important to think very carefully. Once one really feels Buddhism is best approach and suitable for oneself then it is right to adopt Buddhism as a personal religion.

I wanted to say this at the beginning because when the actual explanation of the Four Noble Truths of course I have to say the Buddhist way is best! Also if you ask me what religion is best for me I will say without hesitation Buddhism is best. That does not mean Buddhism is best for everyone. Certainly not! Clear? I want to further emphasize. When I say that the other religions have great potential I am not just being polite. First whether we like it or not the entire human race can not be Buddhist. Clear! Fact! Similarly all of humanity can not be Christian or Moslem. Even in Buddha's time in India everyone did not become Buddhist. I have noticed a genuine warm heart, loving-kindness, and some kind of very forceful loving-kindness in the minds in followers of other religions. My conclusion is that these other religions do have the potential to produce a good heart.

It doesn't matter what philosophy, belief in a creator or other things, a person believes, that doesn't matter. For the non-Buddhist ideas like nirvana or rebirth seems like nonsense. Similarly to Buddhists ideas like a creator looks like nonsense but it doesn't matter. In the actual result a very negative person can through the various religious traditions be transformed into a nice person. That is the purpose or result of religion. That is sufficient reason for respect. Now I will speak through my own language.

I have been given the opportunity to introduce Buddhism. I always make it a point to explain Buddhism in terms of two principals. One is the development of a philosophical viewpoint based on an understanding of the interdependent nature of reality. The second principle is non-violence, which is the actual action of a Buddhist practitioner deriving from the view of the interdependent nature of reality. The meaning of non-harming or non-violent behavior is that if possible one should help others and if

not that at least refrain from harming others. This is the essence of the principal of non-violence.

To explain these two principles in technical Buddhist language then they are known as taking refuge in the Three Jewels, Triratna and what is known as the generation of the altruistic mind or enhancement of one's good heart. It is very evident that the practice of generating the mind entails committing oneself in activities aimed primarily at helping others. Whereas the practice of taking refuge in the Three Jewels lays the foundation for the individual practitioner to live a way of life within an ethically disciplined lifestyle that avoids engaging in actions harmful to others thus living according to the laws of karma, causality.

Therefore unless the individual practitioner has a good foundational experience or practice of taking refuge in the Three Jewels it is not possible to have a high level of realization of bodhicitta or generation of the altruistic mind. From the Buddhist point of view the demarcation or line that distinguishes between a practicing Buddhist and a non-Buddhist is made on the basis of whether or not the individual has taken refuge in the Three Jewels.

When one talks about taking refuge in the Three Jewels one should not have the notion that it involves a ceremony where one take refuge from a master or something like that. It is not simply participating in a ceremony that one becomes a Buddhist. This is not the point. The point is that even without a master, as a result of one's own reflection one becomes fully convinced in the validity of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha as the true, ultimate objects of refuge and entrusts one's spiritual well-being to these objects of refuge, this is the point where one becomes a Buddhist. Whereas if even if one has participated in a ceremony, if there is any doubt or apprehension in one's mind about the validity of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha as being the ultimate source of refuge, this suspicion or doubt excludes one as being a practicing Buddhist.

Therefore for a practicing Buddhist it is important to understand who or what these objects of refuge are. When one speaks about Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and particularly about the Buddha, one should not confine one's understanding of the term Buddha only to the historical person who lived in India and taught a spiritual way of life. Rather one's understanding of the concept of Buddhahood should be based on levels of consciousness or of spiritual realization. It is a spiritual state of being that has to be understood. The Buddhist scriptures talk about Buddhas of the past, present and future.

The question now is to try to develop an understanding on how a Buddha comes into being. How does a fully enlightened being come into being? When one thinks about Buddhahood certainly one reflects on the question of whether or not it is possible for an individual to attain such a state or to become a Buddha. The key lies in understanding the nature of Dharma because if Dharma exists then certainly the Sangha exists, members who have engaged in the path of the Dharma and have realized and actualized the Dharma. If Sangha members exist who have reached levels of spiritual states where they have overcome at least gross levels of negativities and afflictive emotions, then one can envision the possibility of obtaining total freedom from these negativities and afflictive emotional states. This is the state of a Buddha. The key then is understanding the nature of Dharma.

When one talks about the Dharma one is talking about two dimensions or aspects. One is the path that leads to cessation and the other is the cessation itself, the cessation of

suffering and the afflictive emotions. When talking about Dharma one needs to be able to make distinctions between the usage of the term Dharma as a generic term for the Buddha's teaching and the realizations based on the practice of the scriptural Dharma and the Dharma Jewel. The Dharma Jewel should be understood as true cessation and the path leading to it. It is only on the basis of the understanding of the true cessation and the path leading to that cessation whereby one can have an understanding of Arhatship or the state of liberation.

Therefore in one of the sutras, the *Pratityasamutpada Sutra*, Buddha stated that whoever perceives the interdependent nature of reality, the principle of dependent origination, sees the Dharma. Whoever sees the Dharma sees the Buddha or Tathagata. When one tries to understand this statement of the Buddha from that scripture if one were to approach it from the perspective of Nagarjuna's teachings or the Madhyamika School then one could arrive at the most comprehensive understanding of this statement. When it comes to discussing philosophical viewpoints of Nagarjuna if one were to criticize me saying that I am biased towards it, I would certainly accept that criticism.

When one tries to understand this fundamental Buddhist philosophical principle of pratityasamutpada, dependent origination, the understanding that is common to all Buddhist schools is in terms of causal dependence. Pratit means to depend on. Samutpada refers to origination. The understanding common to all the Buddhist schools of thought is to look at this principle in terms of causal dependence, to appreciate and understand that all things and events come into being only as the result of the interaction of various causes and conditions.

The significance of making the statement all conditioned things come into being purely as a result of causes and conditions is to deny two possibilities. One is the possibility they can come into being from nowhere without causes or conditions, causelessly. The second possibility being negated is that things come into being as the result of a transcendent creator. However there is another dimension to the understanding of this principle. That is to say understanding the principle of dependent origination in terms of parts and whole, how all material objects can be understood in terms of how parts compose a whole. The very concept of wholeness depends on the existence of parts. So there is dependence in the physical world and similarly in non-physical entities like consciousness then one can look at them in terms of their temporal sequences. The very idea of unity and wholeness of consciousness is dependent upon successive sequences that compose a continuum or wholeness. When one looks at the universe in these terms then not only can one understand all conditioned things as dependently originated but also the entirety of phenomena can be understood by the principal of dependent origination.

There is a further dimension to the meaning of the principle of dependent origination which is to say that all things and events comes into being purely as the result of the mere aggregation of many factors. When analyzed one understands that it is simply in dependence upon others that all things come into being and they lack any independent or intrinsic identity or intrinsic existence. There is no autonomous existence or identity to anything. The identity or existence one perceives in things is contingent as it comes into being as the result of an interaction between one's perception and the existence of reality itself. However this is not to say that things do not exist. They do exist however they do not exist with independent, autonomous reality.

Corresponding to these three different dimensions or levels of meaning of the principle of dependent origination one can also read three different meanings into the concept of Dharma referring back to Buddha's statement. Seeing dependent origination leads to seeing the Dharma here relates to the first level of dependent origination in terms of causal dependence. By developing a deep understanding of the interdependent nature of reality in terms of causal dependence then one will be able to appreciate the workings of karma or karmic law. One understands how experiences of pain and suffering come into being as the result of negative actions, thoughts and behavior. Similarly how desirable experiences like happiness and joy come into being as the result of causes and conditions that correspond to these such as positive actions, emotions and thoughts. By understanding the principal of dependent origination in causal terms one will be able to develop a deep understanding of the law of karma.

Once one develops a deep understanding of the principle of dependent origination in terms of causal dependence it gives one fundamental insight into the nature of reality that everything one perceives and experiences comes into being as the result of the aggregation of causes and conditions. One develops a fundamental perspective towards one's own experiences and also towards the world at large. Once one sees everything in terms of this causal principle and once one has this kind of philosophical outlook, one is able to locate or situate one's understanding of karma within this principle. The operation of karmic laws is an instance of the overall general causal principle.

Similarly when one has developed a deep understanding of the other two levels of dependent origination, dependence on parts or whole and the interdependence between perception and existence, then one will be able to develop a deeper philosophical perspective on the world. One appreciates that there is a disparity between the way things appear to one and the way they really exist. What appears as having some kind of intrinsic, autonomous, objective reality "out there" does not fit the actual nature of reality. Once one is able to develop this perspective, this understanding that there is a disparity, a fundamental gap, between the way things appear and the way they really exist, then one will gain an insight into the workings of one's own emotions and reactions towards events. One will gain an insight that underlying one's strong emotional responses to situations and events there is an assumption of an independently existing and abiding object, an objective reality "out there".

Once one is able to develop the understanding and appreciation of this fundamental disparity between appearance and reality, then one will be able to understand that underlying many of one's strong emotions, emotional responses towards events and situations, there is an assumption of an independently existing reality "out there". This gives one insight into the various functions of the mind and the different levels of consciousness that exist within one's mind. If one is able to develop the understanding that within one's own mental or emotional states there are certain states which may seem very real and are related to objects which seem so real and vivid but in reality these are illusory states. The objects related to the emotional state do not really exist. Through this way one can gain an insight into what in technical Buddhist terminology is called the origin of suffering.

The afflictive emotional experiences or states lead to confusion, misapprehension and afflict the mind. When this is combined with the understanding of the interdependent nature of reality at the subtlest level then one will also gain insight into what in technical

Buddhist terms is called the empty nature of reality, the emptiness of all things and events. Each and every object and event lack intrinsic or independent reality. They come into being only as the result of the aggregation of many factors. They do not possess an existence or identity that is independent or autonomous. Once one gains insight into this emptiness then one will understand that any apprehensions which conceive reality in the contrary way, thinking that things exist intrinsically or independently, then one will know that these apprehensions are misconceptions pertaining to the nature of reality. One will also realize that they have no valid grounding either in reality or in one's own valid experiences. Whereas the empty nature of reality has a valid grounding both in reason and also in one's own experience. Through this way one will be able to understand and appreciate the possibility of arriving at a state of knowledge where one can eliminate misapprehension completely. This is the state of cessation. The point is that by developing a deep and profound understanding of the principal of dependent origination one can understand both the truth of the subtle origins of suffering and the truth of cessation.

This is the explanation of the Buddha's statement that by seeing dependent origination one sees the Dharma. Through this way one can see the truth of cessation and the path leading towards that cessation. Once one understands the path and the cessation the path leads to then one can perceive the possibility of Sangha members who have realized and actualized these states and also Buddhas who would have perfected these states and experiences. To sum up, this is the meaning of the Buddha's statement that by understanding the principal of dependent origination in causal terms one understands the law of karma, the causal principle that operates fundamentally in reality. Also by complimenting this understanding of the causal principle with dependent origination at a subtler level then one understands the nature of Dharma in terms of cessation and the path leading to that cessation. Once one has gained an understanding of cessation and the path then one understands what Tathagata means or what the Buddha means.

Therefore I feel that in order to develop a profound or comprehensive understanding of the Four Noble Truths it is necessary to have an understanding of the Two Truths. Therefore Candrakirti says in his *Prasannapada, Clear Words* if one can appreciate the principle or doctrine of emptiness, if one can posit emptiness, then one can posit the interdependent world, the world of dependent origination. If one can posit that then one can posit causality, the causal relation between suffering and its origin. Once one can except the causal relation between suffering and its origin, one can also conceive and accept the possibility of its cessation. If one can do this then one can also accept the possibility of individual Sangha members who have realized and actualized these states. If one can do this then one can also conceive of Buddhas who have perfected these states of cessation.

This is how one can appreciate the fundamental Buddhist doctrine of the Two Truths. It is from the understanding of the phenomenal world of experience; the everyday world of lived experience, that one can appreciate what is known as the world of lokasamvrtisatya, the world of conventional reality where the causal principle operates. Once one can accept this then one can also accept the fundamental empty nature underlying reality, which according to Buddhism is the ultimate truth, paramarthasatya. Here one can see a relationship between the two aspects of reality as the world of appearance is used not so much as a contrast or an oppositional world to the ultimate

truth, but rather is used as the evidence or basic ground on which the ultimate nature is accepted. Once one can understand the relationship and the nature of the Two Truths, the world of conventional reality and the ultimate truth, then one is in a good position to fully understand the meaning of the Four Noble Truths as taught in the scriptures. Once one can understand the Four Noble Truths then one has laid a profound foundation to develop a good understanding of what is meant by taking refuge in the Three Jewels.

When I speak about the Two Truths you must keep in mind that I am speaking from the perspective of the Madhyamika School, the Middle Way School of Buddhism. Of course the very term Two Truths is not confined to this school alone but is found in other schools of Buddhism; Vaibhasika, Sautrantika and Cittamatra. Also the concept of the Two Truths can be found in non-Buddhist philosophical schools as well.

Now the question is why the Four Noble Truths? Why do they exist? Why did the Buddha teach the Four Noble Truths? Here one must relate this to one's own experience as an individual human being. It is a natural fact of existence that we all as individuals possess the innate desire to seek happiness and overcome suffering. This is a fact of human existence. This is instinctual and innate and does not need any validation or justification for its existence. Just as it is a natural instinctual desire so do each of us have the right to fulfill that aspiration. Of course suffering is something everyone wishes to avoid and we also have the right to try and overcome that suffering. Happiness is something everyone aspires to achieve of course everyone has the right to fulfill the aspiration to attain happiness.

If aspiring to achieve happiness and wishing to overcome suffering is a natural state of being then the question arises how does one go about fulfilling these valid, natural aspirations? Here one finds in the teachings of the Four Noble Truths an understanding of two sets of cause and effect. On the one hand one has suffering which is what everyone tries to avoid and suffering comes into being from its own causes and conditions. Similarly one has happiness on the other side and cessation can be seen as the highest form of happiness. Here when one discusses happiness one should not confine one's understanding to only the level of feeling states. Certainly cessation is not a state of feeling. One could say that cessation is the highest culmination or form of happiness as it is a true state of the freedom from suffering. True freedom from suffering or true happiness again does not come into being from nowhere or without any cause. Of course here from the Buddhist understanding because cessation is not a conditioned existence, it can not be said to be produced by something but the actualization or attainment of this cessation depends upon the path, on an individual's effort. One can not attain cessation without making effort. One could say that the path that leads to the cessation is the cause. Within the teachings of the Four Noble Truths what one finds is two sets of cause and effect which are all aimed at enabling the individual to fulfill one's fundamental aspiration to be happy and overcome suffering.

The question could be asked why is there a specific sequence? Why are the Four Noble Truths taught in a particular order? One should understand that the order has nothing to do with the way things come into being but rather it has to do with how an individual can go about practicing the Buddhist path and attaining realizations based on that path.

Maitreya states in his *Uttaratantra, The Sublime Continuum*, one must first recognize that one is ill, then one needs to know the causes of illness to be avoided. The

state of cure must be sought and then the medicine leading to the cure must be taken. Similarly suffering is something one must recognize, the origin of the suffering must be abandoned, one must aspire to the cessation of suffering and then the path leading to that cessation must be realized. The analogy of a sick person is used here to explain the way in which realizations based on the Four Noble Truths could be obtained. In order for the sick person to get well the first step is that the sick person must know that they are sick. Without this knowledge the desire to be cured from that sickness will not arise. Once one has that recognition one will try to find out what conditions led to the illness and what conditions worsen the illness. Once one has recognize these factors one gains an understanding if it can be cured or not. Once one has recognized what are the conditions which led to one's illness one will also have a stronger desire to be free from this illness as one has a conviction that one can overcome the illness. Once one has this conviction then one will adopt the treatment.

Similarly unless one knows one is suffering, one's desire to be free from suffering will not arise in the first place. The first step for a practicing Buddhist is to recognize one's state of dukha, in the nature of suffering. Once one has this recognition then will then look into the causes and conditions giving rise to the state of suffering.

It is very important that one understands the context of the Buddha's emphasis on developing the profound recognition of being in a state of suffering or dukha. Otherwise there is a danger of misunderstanding the Buddha's spiritual approach or outlook thinking that Buddhism demands a lot of morbid reasoning, being pessimistic and thinking only about suffering. The reason the Buddha emphasized suffering and developing a profound insight into the nature of suffering is because there is an alternative, a way out. There is the possibility of freedom from suffering. This is why the recognition or realization of the nature of suffering becomes very important as the stronger or deeper one's insight into the state of suffering is the stronger the force of one's aspiration to gain freedom from suffering becomes. It is important to understand that the emphasis on the nature of suffering and the Buddhist spiritual path is in the context of a wider perspective where there is an appreciation that there is a way out. There is the possibility of freedom from suffering. Otherwise if there were no possibility of freedom from suffering, no liberation from suffering, then it would be totally pointless to spend so much time reflecting on suffering. It would be useless.

One could say that these two sets of cause and effect that I talked about earlier refer to the process of an unenlightened existence on one hand which leads to the causal nexus between suffering and its origins, and then the process of an enlightened existence which pertains to the causal nexus between the path and true cessation on the other hand. When the Buddha elaborates on the understanding of these two processes then he taught the doctrine of the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination. This chain starts with ignorance leading to volition followed by consciousness and so on. This is in some sense an elaboration on the teachings of the Four Noble Truths. When the causal process of an unenlightened existence within the framework of suffering and its origin is elaborated then one has the sequential order of the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination. These links show how an individual sentient being as a result of certain causes and conditions enters into the process of samsaric or unenlightened existence. Whereas the same individual as the result of certain practices can engage in a reversal process of the order,

which leads towards, processes ending in enlightenment. Here the Twelve Links are reversed and this leads to true cessation.

For example, if one ceases the continuum of ignorance then the continuum of volitional actions will be ceased. When volitional actions cease consciousness ceases. When consciousness ceases then name and form cease. One can see that the teachings on the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination are in some sense an elaboration of the two sets of causes and conditions.

Question: Your Holiness spoke about individual practitioners gaining insight into the Four Noble Truths then spoke about how the Buddha perfected those insights. What is the difference between individuals gaining insight and Buddha's perfection of these insights?

Answer: To give an example of gaining insight into subtle impermanence, the momentary nature of all things and events, an individual at the initial stage may have an understanding of things as being impermanent but still has strong grasping at the permanence of things. In order to loosen the grip of grasping one needs some form of critical reasoning, which in the least can cast doubt or suspicion in the individual's mind as to the permanence of things. This in and of itself will have an impact on the individual's mind as will start loosening the grip of things as permanent or eternal. This is not enough. One needs further reinforcement of the critical reasoning to point one more towards the impermanence of things. Even this is not enough one needs further conviction and this can be gained again through constant reflection. This leads towards what is called the inferential or intellectual understanding of impermanence.

This again is not enough in order to have a strong impact on one's behavior. One must gain direct insight or intuitive experience of the impermanence of things. This again needs to be further perfected as the grasping at permanence is deeply imbedded in one's consciousness. One insight can not dispel it. It is a long process of deepening one's insight that will eventually dispel even the smallest tendency towards grasping at permanence. It is the same for emptiness.

However there are certain aspects of the path, which have less to do with cognitive experiences and more with enhancement of the heart like compassion and bodhicitta. In these areas at the initial stage one needs to develop an understanding of what compassion is and a notion of how it could be enhanced. As a result of one's practice one may gain at the initial stage a simulated experience when one sits down and thinks about compassion. That compassion may not be long lasting and does not permeate one's very being. What is needed is a further deepening of the experience so that compassion becomes spontaneous. This experience of compassion is not dependent on intellectual thought rather it is a truly spontaneous response to occasions requiring such a response. Through this experience of compassion can be further deepened and become universal. Here again it is a long process.

These two aspects of the path are known in technical Buddhist terminology as the method aspect and the wisdom or insight aspect. These two must go hand-in-hand. Method and wisdom must be combined. In order for insight to be enhanced and deepened one needs the complimenting factor from the method aspect such as compassion or bodhicitta. Similarly in order to enhance and deepen and strengthen one's realization of compassion and bodhicitta one needs the factor of wisdom or insight, which grounds or

enhances them. One needs an approach where there is a combination or union of method and wisdom.

In the case of insight into impermanence although this very insight will enable the individual to overcome grasping at permanence, this does not mean that deepening, even perfecting this insight alone would lead to total liberation. One needs further complimentary factors to overcome other obstructions in the mind such as grasping at the objective reality of things, grasping at abiding principles or grasping at intrinsic reality. These also need to be counteracted through developing insight into emptiness. What one sees is a very complex process of progression of an individual's level of consciousness through spiritual processes towards perfection.

Question: Is there a difference between thought and action related to cause and effect? That is to say, can a thought cause an action and vice versa?

Answer: When one talks about the Buddhist concept of karma, karmic action, it is not confined to bodily actions alone. It also embraces mental or emotional acts. For example when one talks about acts of covetousness or harmful intention, these do not necessarily manifest in behavior. One can have a full action of these thoughts without being expressed in action at all. One can see a completion of these acts even at the level of mind or thought.

Question: It is a well-known fact that you are a very busy person with many demands on your time. Could you advise a layperson with home, family and work on how to develop a systematic routine of practice?

Answer: Generally speaking one must know that when one talks about practicing the Dharma or meditating on the Dharma, it is something which needs to be done twenty-four hours a day. This is why in the traditional Buddhist explanation one makes a distinction between actual meditation sessions and the post-meditational periods. The idea being that both while one is in the meditative session and also when one is out of the session one should be fully within the realm of practice.

In fact the post-meditational period is a real test for the strength of one's practice. During the meditation one is equipping oneself so that when you come out of the meditative session one is better equipped to deal with the demands of everyday reality of one's existence. This is analogous to recharging one's battery. The very purpose of recharging a battery is that one can use it to run something. Similarly once one has equipped oneself in one's meditation through whatever practices one engages in, as a human being one can not avoid the daily routines of one's existence, interacting with others or all the everyday realities of life. These are activities as human beings one can not avoid and it is during these periods that one should be able to live according to the principals of one's Dharma practice. This is one's test.

At the initial stage as a beginner one needs periods of concentrated meditational practice so that one can have at least a base from which to begin. This is very crucial. Once one has established this base then one will be able to adopt a way of life where one's daily activities will be made at least to accord with the principles of the Dharma. What this points to is the importance of making an effort. Without effort there is no way to integrate the principals of Dharma into one's life.

For the serious practitioner a serious effort is very essential. Without this, just a short prayer, some chanting or a recitation with the mala is not sufficient. It can't change. Our negative emotions are so powerful so in order to change them we need a constant

effort. Through this way definitely we can change. Some of my Western friends they request the quickest, easiest and most effective, then perhaps another question the cheapest! I think this is impossible. I usually feel this is a sign of failure.

Question: What is the difference between self-realization and goal realization?

Answer: I don't know.

Question: Would His Holiness say he is free from suffering?

Answer: Certainly not! Lot of suffering and some suffering here, coughing, coughing. This is also a kind of suffering.

End of first session

The First Noble Truth is the truth of suffering. The use of the term truth here has different interpretations to different philosophical schools. I will not go into this partly because I do not remember all of this and partly as it would complicate my explanation. So in dealing with complex issues such as this perhaps the best approach is to adopt a dignified silence.

One of the reasons why I pointed out this complexity in the understanding of the term truth in relation to the Four Noble Truths is because there is a fundamental difference between the Prasangika-Madhyamika School and the other mainstream Buddhist schools as to how one distinguishes between ordinary beings and Arya beings, Superior beings. The other mainstream Buddhist schools make the distinction on the basis of whether or not the individual practitioner has gained direct, intuitive insight into the Four Noble Truths. This is a criteria not accepted by the Prasangika-Madhyamika School. According to the Prasangika-Madhyamika School even non-Arya beings, ordinary beings can have a direct, intuitive understanding of the Four Noble Truths.

What exactly is the meaning of dukha or suffering? Suffering or dukha is the basis for one's painful experiences. In brief dukha refers to one's state of existence as conditioned by karma and delusions or afflictive emotions. Asanga states in the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* that the concept of true dukha or the truth of suffering must embrace both the environment where one lives and also the individual beings living within it.

When one talks about the environment in which unenlightened individuals live Buddhism talks about its cosmology of the Three Realms of Existence; the Karmadhatu or Desire Realm, the Formless Realm and Form Realm. The point here is how to conceptualize the Buddhist idea of the Three Realms. Of course one can not say that Buddha has taught this in the scripture, as this is not alone a sufficient reason for a Buddhist to accept the existence of these realms. Perhaps the most comprehensible way of looking at the Buddhist concept of the Three Realms is by a fundamental Buddhist approach to understand states of existence in terms of levels of consciousness or levels of mind. For example according to Buddhism the very distinction between enlightened existence and unenlightened existence is to be understood on the basis of the level of mind or consciousness. An individual who is within a state of existence where the consciousness is unenlightened, undisciplined and untamed abides in a state of samsara. Someone who is within the state of being which has a consciousness that is disciplined, tamed and enlightened abides in a state of nirvana.

Similarly in Buddhism one also finds a distinction that is made between ordinary beings and Arya or Superior beings again on the basis of the level of consciousness or

level of realization. An individual who has gained direct, intuitive realization of emptiness or the ultimate nature of reality is said to be an Arya or Superior being. Someone who hasn't gained that realization is said to be an ordinary being. Similarly one can examine the Three Realms of existence in terms of the levels of consciousness in their causes. The more subtle the level of consciousness an individual attains the more subtle a realm of existence that individual can attain.

One can look at the concept of the Three Realms from that point of view relating the concept to the idea of levels of consciousness or levels of being within one's mind. For example in ones' ordinary states of being the mode of being is within the context of attachment towards perceived objects like desirable forms or pleasant sensations. Having attachment to the more physical experiences, these gross levels of interaction, thought processes and sensory experiences lead to a form of existence confined within the Desire Realm and for the future as well. Similarly an individual who has transcended attachment towards immediately perceptible objects but rather is attached more towards inner dimensions of experience like internal states of joy or bliss creates causes for future rebirth where physical existence is more refined. Finally there are individuals who have transcended attachment to pleasurable sensations both physical and mental and tend towards states of equilibrium or equanimity. This level of consciousness is much more subtle compared to the others but there is still a form of attachment to a particular mode of being. This state of mind leads to what is known as the Fourth Level of the Form Realm. The subtlest level of attachment towards the states of equanimity leads to the Formless Realms. There is a way of looking at the Three Realms relating them to levels of consciousness.

Based on this cosmology of the Three Realms of Existence Buddhism talks about an infinite process of the universe coming into being, abiding and dissolving. It then again comes into being. This process must be understood in relation to the Three Realms of Existence. According to the Abhidharma literature which discusses metaphysics and cosmology in the Buddhist discourses, it is from the third level of the Form Realm on down that is subject to this continuous process of coming into being, abiding and dissolution. Whereas from the fourth level of the Form Realm on up, which also includes the Formless Realm, is outside this evolutionary process of the universe.

This infinite process of evolution that the physical universe goes through is related to the issue of the Big Bang and Buddhist cosmology. One thing I can say is that if the understanding of the scientific cosmological theory of the Big Bang entails an acceptance of only one Big Bang as the beginning then that would go against basic Buddhist cosmology. If that is the case then Buddhists would need to come up with some way of understanding how it would not contradict the Buddhist idea of the infinite evolution of the universe. If the concept of the Big Bang does not entail only one Big Bang but rather a multiplicity of Big Bangs then of course that would go very well with the basic Buddhist understanding of the evolutionary process.

Whatever is in the Abhidharma literature need not necessarily be accepted as literal. The cosmology in the Abhidharma literature, especially that of our universe, is based on the model of Mount Meru in the middle with four continents around it. Many of the descriptions of the size of the sun and moon are contrary to the current scientific understanding. In this case one would have to conclude given that scientific experiments

have established the Abhidharma model to be wrong, then the conclusions of science need to be accepted on these points.

In Buddhism there is an understanding of a cosmology where the evolution of the physical universe is understood in terms of the four elements; wind, fire, water and earth. A fifth element, space, can be added. There is a complex discussion of this not only in the Abhidharma literature but also in the *Uttaratantra*, *The Sublime Continuum*, as well. These descriptions or explanations seem to be very similar to current scientific theories of cosmology.

This is how Buddhism understands the evolution of the physical universe or the environment. When discussing the sentient beings that inhabit these environments then there is an acceptance of a multiplicity of sentient beings within the Buddhist world. Within the realm of sentient beings there are beings with corporal forms and beings that could be said to be formless. Within one's own familiar world in Buddhism there is a diversity of sentient beings many perceptible to one's sense faculties and some not so obvious to one's sensory faculties, for example the spirit world.

Generally speaking according to Buddhist understanding the human form is considered to be one of the most ideal forms of existence. This is because of its suitability or conduciveness for practicing Dharma. Compared to the human form of existence the spirit form would be considered inferior because of its less effectiveness for the practice of Dharma. Beings in the spirit world may have certain faculties or powers not available to humans but the fact remains that they are a part of the world along with humans. All of these sentient beings are under the control of delusion, under the control of afflictive emotions and thoughts. They all are products of delusions and afflictive thoughts and emotions. Lama Tsong Khapa gives a vivid description of the state of unenlightened beings in samsara. He gives the analogy of someone tied by the ropes of karma, delusions and afflictive emotions who is also encased in a net of ego-consciousness and self-grasping attitudes. This person is then thrown around endlessly by the fluctuating currents of the experiences of suffering and pain. This is unenlightened existence.

The question is if this is the case what is dukha? What is suffering? Buddhism discusses three levels of suffering. One is the suffering of suffering or one could say obvious suffering. Second is the suffering of change. The third is the suffering of conditioning. Suffering at the level of the first type is in very conventional terms of experiences all can identify as suffering. These are painful experiences.

When discussing the suffering of suffering there are four main experiences, which are fundamentally felt to be in the state of suffering. These are the suffering of birth, sickness, old age and death. The significance of recognizing these experiences as suffering is as an impetus or catalyst towards a spiritual quest. This is very strongly demonstrated in Buddha's own life story. Buddha as the Prince Siddhartha according to the story is supposed to have seen a sick person, an old person and a dead body. These sights led him to the realization that so long as he could not free himself from the infinite process of rebirth; he would always be subject to those sufferings. He then saw a spiritual aspirant, which led the Buddha to the full awareness that there is a possibility of freedom from the cycle of suffering.

In Buddhism there is an understanding that so long as one is subject to the process of rebirth that all the other sufferings are in some sense natural consequences of the initial

starting point of birth. One could say that one's life is characterized within the cycle of birth and death with sickness and old age sandwiched in between.

The second level of suffering, the suffering of change, refers to experiences one would ordinarily identify as pleasurable. In reality as long as one is in an unenlightened state all of one's joyful experiences are contaminated and therefore ultimately suffering. The reason why Buddhism states that these supposedly pleasurable experiences are ultimately states of suffering is because according to Buddhism there is an understanding that one experiences pleasurable states only in comparison to painful experiences. They tend to appear as a sort of relief so they are in some sense relative. The pleasurable status is only relative to a painful experience. Therefore if they are truly joyful states or experiences then just as the more one indulges in the causes leading to pain the painful experiences increase similarly the more one indulges in the causes of so-called pleasure the pleasure or joy should intensify. This is not the case.

In our daily life when we have some valuable ornament for a short period you feel this is really marvelous. One shows it off to others. After one week or one month passes this same object no longer appeals and one feels frustrated. This is nature. This is a fact. Also fame. At the beginning you may feel happy, "Oh now I have a good name!" Again as time passes you feel frustration, dissatisfaction. Same with friends or sexual feelings. At the beginning you almost become mad. The same factors eventually create dissatisfaction and hate. In the worst case it leads to fighting and murder. This is the nature. Every beautiful thing, everything we consider desirable if you look closely as time passes most of these factors eventually give us suffering. So this is the second level. (H.H. in English)

Now the third level. Why is it that things have this nature? The answer is because all of this happens due to ignorance. The very name ignorance is not comfortable, not good. Under the control of ignorance there is no possibility of a permanent state of happiness. Some kind of trouble, some kind of problem always happens. (H.H. in English). So long as one remains under the power of ignorance or the fundamental misapprehension or confusion then suffering comes one after another like ripples on water. The third level of suffering or dukha is known as the suffering of conditioning. This refers to the mere fact of one's unenlightened existence which is under the influence or control of the fundamental state of confusion and also the negative karma this confusion gives rise to. The reason why it is called the suffering of conditioning is because not only does this mere state of existence serve as the basis for one's many painful experiences in this life but it also serves as the basis to create causes and conditions for future suffering as well.

In order to develop a deeper understanding of the third level of dukha one of the most useful ways of looking at this is the one described in Dharmakirti's *Pramanvarttika* and also in Aryadeva's *Four Hundred Verses on the Middle Way* where there is an emphasis on reflecting upon the subtle transitory or impermanent nature of reality. When one discusses impermanence or the transient nature of things it is important to be reminded that there are two levels of meaning. One can understand impermanence in terms of how something comes into being, stays for awhile then disappears. This level of impermanence or transitoriness is quite easily understood. The destruction of the object requires a secondary condition. An object comes into being and when its life span ends another condition acts as a catalyst to destroy its continuity.

There is a more subtle level understanding of the concept of impermanence or the transient nature of things. This is the mere effect of how everything goes through a dynamic process of change, how everything is going through a process of momentary changes. This process of constant momentary change that all things go through is not because there is a further secondary condition that makes things become momentary but rather it is the very primary cause which lead the object to come into being that is also the cause of its destruction. One could say that within the cause of its origin is also the cause of its cessation or destruction. This momentary, transient nature can not only be understood in terms of an entity in the first instance not staying, not enduring during its second instance or second moment but also the fact that when the first instance comes into being it is not static, it is moving towards its own cessation.

Since everything comes into being, right at the beginning of its very birth, comes together with its seed or potential for its dissolution or destruction. One could say that the destruction or cessation of things or events does not need a secondary, further condition. Therefore in Buddhism all phenomena are said to be “other-powered”, they are under the power or control of their causes.

Once one has developed that kind of understanding of the transient nature of phenomena then one can situate one’s understanding of dukha within this context. One can then reflect upon one’s very existence, one’s aggregates of mind and body, in this samsaric world. One understands that one’s very existence has come into being as the result of its own causes and conditions. Therefore it must also be “other-powered”. It must also be under the control of the causal processes that gave rise to its coming into being. However in the context of one’s own existence within the samsaric world, the cause being referred to here is nothing other than one’s own fundamental confusion, *ma-rigpa* or ignorance and the delusory states that the confusion gives rise to. One knows that so long as one is under the domination or control of this fundamental confusion along with its delusions and afflictive emotions that it gives rise to, then there is no place for lasting joy, lasting happiness. Of course within the Three Realms of Existence one can talk about comparatively more happy states of existence, relatively joyful existence. However as long as one remains within the samsaric world in any of the Three Realms and remains under the twin forces of fundamental confusion and its subsequent delusions, there is no hope for lasting joy. In the final analysis one is in a state of suffering or dukha. This is the meaning of the third level of understanding of dukha.

Fundamental ignorance or confusion, the Sanskrit is *avidya*, which literally means ignorance, similar to the different interpretations of the fundamental Buddhist doctrine of anatman or no self, has different interpretations of what is meant by *avidya* or ignorance. However the general meaning that is common to all schools is an understanding that there is a fundamental ignorance at the root of our existence. The reason is quite simple. One knows from one’s own experience that one deeply aspires to gain happiness and try to avoid suffering. However one’s actions and one’s behavior leads to more suffering and does not lead to the lasting joy and happiness that one seeks. This must surely mean that one operates in an ignorant way. This is the fundamental confusion at the root of one’s existence.

When reflecting on the nature of dukha according to the Buddhist teachings for some practitioners contemplating on the sufferings in specific realms such as the hells or hungry ghosts, *pretas*, may find this very powerful to motivate them towards a deeper

spiritual quest to attain freedom from suffering. However for many others, including myself, reflection upon our own human suffering perhaps is more effective. Although the human form of existence is considered to be one of the most positive where we have all the potentials to perfect enlightenment even then the state of existence of a human life isn't that joyful. We are subject to unavoidable sufferings of birth, sickness, aging and death. Also when one reflects upon the fact that one's conditioned existence is under the influence or domination of the fundamental confusion and also the delusory states of afflictive emotions and thoughts then for someone like myself the recognition of the suffering nature seems to be much more effective than thinking of the sufferings of some other realms.

In the Buddhist scriptures when this causal process of how the fundamental confusion gives rise to volitional acts which then give rise to birth in a samsaric world within the complete chain of the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination, Buddha made three observations. First he said because there is this, that ensued. Because this came into being, that came into being. Because there was fundamental ignorance, volitional acts came into being. When commenting on these three statements Asanga in his *Abhidharmasamuccaya* talked about three conditions. I think understanding this point would be very useful.

When commenting on the first statement Asanga said that the significance of that statement is to tell one that all phenomena come into being from causes. It is not as if there was a first cause, a beginning, rather there is an infinite chain of causation. Therefore Asanga referred to this observation or qualification as the first condition.

When commenting on the second statement Asanga spoke about what he called the impermanent condition, the quality of being impermanent. The significance is that just because something exists is not enough to produce an effect. In order for something to have the potential to produce an effect that very entity or thing itself must be subject to causation. It must also come into being as the result of other causes so there is an infinity of causes. Just because something exists, mere existence alone is not adequate for giving rise to consequences. Not only must the cause be existent but also the cause should be impermanent, subject to causation.

Asanga, when commenting on the third statement, talked about further qualifications that are needed for a cause to produce an effect. He referred to this condition as the condition of potentiality. This is the idea that it is not enough or adequate for the cause to be existent and impermanent to produce a particular or specific result, anything can not produce everything. There must be some kind of concordance between cause and effect, some kind of natural relationship. Therefore because the state of one's existence is suffering although what one desires is happiness but out of ignorance create suffering, the fundamental root of one's existence is suffering. There is a concordance between the result and its cause. All in all there are three conditions. The cause should be existent, impermanent and concordant with the result or effect.

In Buddhist analysis when trying to understand the causal relationship between ignorance and volitional acts, what is required here is a complex understanding of the causal nexus. In the Buddhist scriptures there are many discussions of causes and conditions however the principal understanding of cause must be in terms of two types of causes. One is known as the material cause or substantial cause and the other is the cooperative conditions, factors that assist in causation. By material or substantial cause

one is talking about the very stuff that turns into the effect. One can talk of the continuum of a physical entity. The very stuff or material that turns into the effect is the material cause but many other factors are needed which allow this transition or process to take place. These are the cooperative causes or contributory causes. Similarly when discussing conditions there are different ways conditions can effect a result.

Although these complexities in the ways in which conditions can effect results may have more to do with the complexities of the operation of the mind or functions of mind. However one finds in the scriptures a discussion of five types of conditions. There is the objective condition that refers to the perceptive object. There are the sensory faculties like the organs that give rise to the perception. Then one has the immediately preceding condition, which is the earlier continuum of one's consciousness and so on. So one sees there is a complex understanding of the process of causation in Buddhism.

Take the example of fire. Wood would be the material cause or the substantial cause of fire. One could say there is a potential existing as fuel within the wood, which then becomes the fire. Similarly in the case of consciousness perhaps the issue becomes more complex. Take one's sensory perceptions or consciousnesses. It is obvious that one needs the physical sensory organs and nervous system as a basis for sensory perceptions to take place. Although in the classical Buddhist scriptures there is hardly any discussion of the nervous system perhaps this is something which needs to be added to the Buddhist texts on psychology. However the substantial cause of the consciousness would not be these physical entities. The substantial cause of the consciousness needs to be understood in terms of its own continuum be it in the form of a potential or a propensity. It has to be understood in terms of its continuum.

Although it is a very difficult topic perhaps one could understand it in terms of the continuum of subtle consciousness because one should not lead one self into a position where one ends up implying that the material cause of an entity must be exactly the same. One can not maintain the position that the substantial cause of sensory perceptions need not always be sensory perceptions. This is because sensory consciousnesses are gross levels of consciousness and they are contingent to the physical organs of the individual being, whereas the continuum should be understood more at the level of subtle consciousness. Perhaps one could say that at a certain point sensory perceptions are in the form of potentialities rather than actual conscious states.

When one talks about consciousness or shes-pa the Tibetan word, one should not have the notion that one is talking about a unitary, monolithic entity. One must appreciate the complexity of the mental world. Within the realm of mental phenomena it seems that feelings or sensations and thoughts are two factors of mind which seem perhaps to be most predominate in one's consciousness. Let us now try to examine how the feelings and discursive thoughts occur within us.

When talking about feelings one is talking about two dimensions. One where feelings at the mere physical level of sensations. The more complex issue is trying to conceive or understand feelings or tshor-ba in terms of the mental consciousness. Of course one has to accept that there must be some connection with the nervous system of the body. One must also be able to account for deeper levels of feelings as well.

Here I am pointing towards the nature of mental consciousness, the sixth mental consciousness. I would like to point out that although the research being carried out now is limited and at a very elementary stage however there are experiments performed on

meditators. These experiments are pointing towards a phenomenon, which is perhaps difficult to account for within the current scientific paradigm. What they point out is that without any physical change in the body, without any physical movement by the individual, simply by using the force of the mind, through a single-pointed state one can effect the physiological state of a person. These physiological states which are taking place remain quite difficult to explain within the current assumptions of the physiology of human beings.

To me what this points towards is that when one talks about human consciousness one is talking about a contingent phenomenon. Of course the human consciousness is contingent upon the human body, all of one's experiences are contingent on the human body. There is this inextricable nature of the human mind and body. Yet at the same time what the experiments seem to point out is the possibility that although the human mind is contingent on the body, it has a power of its own which simply through reflection or meditation can be enhanced.

Also one knows that within the modern medical discipline there is a growing recognition of the power of will in the process of healing. There is one could say an effect by will on the physiology of the person. This is a fact recognized even by the modern medical discipline. Also one knows how will is developed. The person does a lot of thinking on reasons and grounds thereby developing a strong will. Similarly someone could develop such a will through meditation. There seems to be an acknowledgement that the will can effect physical change. What seems to be accepted is that whenever thoughts occur they give rise to chemical changes within the brain, which is then manifested by physical expression or physiological changes.

The question arises as to whether pure thought can lead to such physical effects or whether it is the case that whenever a thought occurs, it occurs as the result of chemical changes within the body or brain. This seems to be an open question. I've asked scientists on several occasions as to whether it is possible to have a pure thought first then that thought process gives rise to chemical changes which is then effected at the physiological level. Most of the time the answer is that there is an assumption that consciousness is dependent upon the physical base. Every occurrence of thought by necessity is caused by chemical changes within the brain. This seems to me to be a sort of prejudice rather than something experimentally proven. Here I think the question is still open and so what is needed here is further investigation and experimentation particularly on the part of practitioners by engaging in profound meditations and to see what changes can be effected within oneself.

When talking about the nature of consciousness and the functions of mind, I think explanations found in the Vajrayana literature where there is discussion of the existence of different levels of consciousness or subtleties of mind and their corresponding subtleties of energy levels or pranas, can contribute a lot to the Buddhist understanding of the nature of mind and its functions.

When trying to investigate the nature of one's own mind through introspection, one finds in one's own experience that most of one's conscious mind seems to be states of consciousness dealing with either objects experienced in the past, recollections and past experiences which inform one's present consciousness or with feelings and sensations. One's experience of consciousness tends to be pervaded by either discursive thoughts or sensations.

Given that one's consciousness is so dominated by discursive thoughts having to do with objects, things, and sensations, it is very difficult for one to have a glimpse into the actual nature of consciousness. The actual nature is a mere state of knowing or luminosity. Therefore one technique to be used is to sit in meditation and free one's mind from thoughts of recollection of any past experiences or any form of anticipation of what might happen in the future. Rather try to abide in the now or present although one can not talk of present consciousness. Try to free one's thoughts, free one's mind from these thoughts that are directed towards the past or future. Be concerned only with the now. When one is able to clear away these past or anticipatory thoughts and abide in the present then one might slowly have a glimpse of spaciousness or void. If one can extend this period of voidness for longer periods of time then gradually the nature of consciousness as a mere luminosity and awareness will slowly dawn. Through practice this intervening period can be lengthened so that the awareness of consciousness becomes clearer to one's mind.

However one must know that the experience of the luminosity and knowing nature of the mind in itself is not a profound realization. Many of the Formless Realms are considered to be the results of abiding in states of clarity. However using that initial experience of the luminosity of consciousness as a basis then one can build on the experience by complementing it with other practices. This is how one can look at the Buddha's teaching on the truth of suffering within all this complexity.

Once one has developed this kind of recognition of the dukha-nature of one's existence then one already has an understanding that at the root of one's existence is the fundamental confusion, avidya. This of course points towards the Second Truth, the Truth of the Origin of Suffering.

End of second session

Yesterday I spoke about that what we naturally desire is happiness and wish to overcome suffering. Contrary to our natural aspirations often we tend to create more conditions for suffering and are ignorant of the ways for creating causes for our own happiness. What is found at the root of all of this is the fundamental confusion or in Buddhist language fundamental ignorance. This is a state of confusion in relation to not only the way things are but also in relation to the way cause and effect relate to each other.

Therefore in Buddhism when talking about fundamental ignorance or avidya one talks of two levels of ignorance. One is the ignorance or confusion relating to the laws of causality, the law of karma. The second one is ignorance or confusion pertaining to one's understanding of the ultimate nature of reality. These two types of ignorance are related to the two levels of understanding of dependent origination, pratityasamutpada. Understanding the pratityasamutpada in terms of causal dependence will enable one to dispel the confusion pertaining to karmic laws or causality. Understanding or deep insight into dependent origination in terms of the ultimate nature of reality will enable one to dispel the confusion pertaining to one's understanding of the ultimate nature of reality.

However this does not mean that this ignorance or confusion is the only cause of one's unenlightened existence. Of course there are many other derivative causes or conditions which are the afflictive emotions and thoughts. These are a complex class of emotions and thoughts. One finds detailed descriptions of these emotions and thoughts in

the Abhidharma literature. For example according to the Abhidharma literature there is an understanding of six root negative emotions out of which arises twenty secondary negative emotions. So there is a complex explanation of the role of negative emotions and thoughts.

A further explanation of the process of being in an unenlightened existence is in the tantric Vajrayana literature where there is what are known as the eighty types of conceptions. These are indicative of one being in an unenlightened existence. Similarly in the Kalachakra literature, which belongs to the Vajrayana class, there is also a further identification of factors or causes of samsaric existence. These are understood in terms of propensities or natural dispositions.

These afflictive emotions and thoughts, which arise from one's fundamental state of confusion, motivate volitional actions. Together the delusions and karmic actions are the origins of one's suffering. Generally speaking the kleshas or afflictive emotions are defined as that emotion or thought which the mere occurrence of it in oneself creates an immediate disturbance within one's mind and afflicts from within. This is the general definition of a klesha.

What is meant by karma? I would like to remind you again to situate your understanding of karma in the wider context of the Buddhist understanding of the natural laws of causality. Karma is an instance of the natural causal laws that operate within the universe. There is an understanding according to Buddhism that things and events come into being purely as the result of the aggregation of causes and conditions. Similarly karma is an instance of that. The unique feature of karma is that it involves an intentional action. Karma involves an agent. There are causal processes operating in the world but where there is no agent involved one can not really talk about karma. In order for a causal process to be a karmic causal process there is a need for an agent, an individual whose intention would lead to particular action. This type of causal nexus or causal mechanism is known as karma.

Within the karmic action, generally speaking there are three types of karmic actions corresponding to the effects they produce. The actions that produce suffering or pain are generally speaking considered negative actions or non-virtuous actions. Whereas actions that led to positive consequences, desirable consequences of joy and happiness, these actions are said to be positive or virtuous actions. The third category of actions that lead to experiences of equanimity or states of neutral feelings or experiences are considered to be neutral actions, neither virtuous nor non-virtuous.

In terms of the actual nature of the karmic actions themselves one can talk of two different types of karma. One type is mental karmic acts, which need not be physically manifested as action but rather are mental acts. The second type is physical actions either bodily acts or speech. Principally there are two types of actions. Similarly from the point of view of mediums through which the actions are expressed or executed one can talk of actions of the mind or of speech or of the body. Similarly in the scriptures one also finds discussions about karmic actions which are completely virtuous, completely non-virtuous or a mixture of those two. I feel that many of us who practice the Dharma and who believe in the Dharma perhaps most of our actions are a mixture of the two.

If one looks at a single instance of a karmic action one can see stages within that event. There is the beginning, which is the stage of motivation or intention. Then there is the actual execution of the act. Then there is the culmination or completion of the act. In

the scriptures there is an understanding that the intensity or force of an action can vary depending on how these stages are carried out. In the example of a negative action, if the person at the stage of motivation has a forceful emotion say anger, a forceful negative motive and acts out on that impulse but immediately afterwards feels deep regret then that action would be less forceful. This is because the three stages; motivation, action and the completion were not fully in accord, fulfilled. Therefore that action would be seen as less forceful compared to an instance where the person has acted out completely with a strong motivation, actual execution and a sense of pleasure or satisfaction for the act committed. Similarly there can be instances where an individual has very weak motivation but certain circumstances forces the individual to actually commit the act. In this case although the negative act is committed it would be less forceful as a strong motivating force was absent. Depending on how forceful the motivation, actual act and the completion are, there are varying degrees of force and intensity of the karma.

In the scriptures because of these differences one finds discussions of four types of karma; karma in which the action is executed but not accumulated, karma which is accumulated but not executed, karma where the act is both executed and accumulated, karma with the absence of both execution and accumulation of the act. Once one understands the significance of this point that within a single act there are different stages to the actual act, the karma itself is a composite, an accumulated act, then whenever one has the opportunity to engage in a positive action, as a practitioner it is important to insure that at the initial stage, one's motivation is very strong. One needs a strong intention to engage in the act and while one is actually executing the act one should insure that one has given one's best effort into the successful karmic action. At the end after the act is committed it is important to insure that one dedicates the positive karma accumulated towards the well being of all sentient beings and one's own attainment of enlightenment. If one can, it is important to reinforce that dedication with an understanding of the empty nature, the ultimate nature of reality, which would make it more forceful.

Similarly as a practitioner ideally one should avoid engaging in any negative actions at all, however if one finds oneself in a situation where one is committing a non-virtuous action it is important to make sure at least the motivation is not strong. Similarly while one is executing the non-virtuous action if there is a sense of regret or remorse, though committed the negative act will be weakened. Also there shouldn't be any sense of satisfaction, one should not take joy in any negative action committed. Rather one should feel deep regret and remorse then immediately follow the act if possible with a purification of the negativity. If one can follow a way of life where this is one's way of relating to positive and negative actions then one will be able to follow the law of the teachings on karma in a much more effective way.

Although there are many different types of negative actions in most of the Buddhist scriptures where teachings on karma are presented, negative actions are condensed or summarized as avoidance of the Ten Negative Actions. There are three actions of body, four of speech and three of mind. The three negative bodily acts are killing, stealing and sexual misconduct. The four negative actions of speech are telling lies, engaging in divisive speech, harsh speech and engaging in senseless gossip. The three negative mental actions are covetousness, harmful intention and holding wrong views. The ideal practicing Buddhist must live a way of life where one avoids all of these

negative actions. If this is not possible then one should refrain from as many as possible. In leading an ethically disciplined way of life one avoids these negative actions according to Buddhism.

The general mode of procedure of a spiritual practitioner in Buddhism is that at the initial stage one's ultimate aspiration is to attain liberation from samsara. Therefore one of the principal tasks of such a practitioner is to gain victory over the kleshas. But at the initial stage there is no way that the practitioner can directly combat the kleshas or afflictive emotions and thoughts. The sensible way to proceed then is to find a way of coping with the expression of these negative emotions and thoughts through one's conduct of body, speech and mind. Therefore the first step towards gaining that ultimate aspiration of gaining victory over the kleshas is to guard one's body, speech and mind from engaging in negative actions. One does not give in to the power and domination of the afflictive emotions and thoughts.

Once one has achieved this first stage then one can proceed on to the second stage, which is then to tackle the root cause, the fundamental confusion spoken about earlier. At this stage one can directly counteract the force of the kleshas. The third stage is not only to simply gain victory over the delusions but also to root out all the propensities and imprints left by the delusory states of mind within one's mind, one's psyche. Therefore Aryadeva stated in the *Four Hundred Verses of the Middle Way* that a true spiritual aspirant must at the beginning overcome negative actions of body, speech and mind. In the middle phase one must counter the grasping at a self or ego. In the final stage the aspirant should overcome all views that bind one within samsara.

When Buddhism talks about how both the environment and sentient beings are the results of fundamental confusion and particularly karma, one should not have the notion that karma produces these things out of nowhere. This is not the case. Karma is not like an eternal cause. Rather one must understand that in order for karma to operate, to have the potential to create its consequences, there must be a base, a basis. Therefore both in terms of the physical world and the mental world, the continuum is always there. For example in the case of the physical world, one can trace the continuum of the physical world to the beginning of a particular universe. According to Buddhism one can trace this back to a stage of empty space where there is an acceptance of what is known as space particles. "Space particle" is not the best translation. There is a stage of empty space during which the source of the material universe is contained within the space particles.

Similarly in the case of the mental world so far as the continuum of sentient beings is concerned, there is an unending process of continuity of both matter and mind. This is not the result of karma. The question arises, where does karma fit in? At what point does karma play a causal role in producing sentient beings and the natural environment? Perhaps one could say that there is the natural process in the universe and at the point where the evolution has reached a stage where it can effect experiences of sentient beings with either pleasure or pain, that is the point where karma begins to come into the picture. Karmic processes can make sense only in relation to sentient beings experiences, be it suffering or pleasure.

For example if the question is asked whether consciousness is produced by karma or if sentient beings are produced by karma, the answer should be in the negative. But if the question is the human body or consciousness the product of karma, then the answer would be yes. The human body and consciousness are consequences of positive actions,

virtuous actions. When one is talking about a human body and human consciousness one is already talking about a state of existence which deals directly with the experiences of an individual's pain and pleasure.

Similarly if one is asked the question of whether the natural aspiration, instinctual desire, to seek happiness and overcome suffering is a product of karma. The answer would be no. Similarly when one thinks about the evolution of the physical universe at large in the context of the Big Bang, generally speaking so far as the natural processes of cause and effect in the physical world is concerned, I do not think this is a product of karma. The process of cause and effect in the natural world takes place regardless of karma but in what form or what direct that process leads to then karma has a role to play.

What one finds is that in the natural world in terms of applying inquiry in terms of identifying the objects of inquiry from the Buddhist analytical point of view, it seems that one could say there are two distinct types of objects of inquiry. One object or one realm that is natural, only natural causal laws operate. One can also speak about another realm of inquiry where as a result of causal interactions there are certain properties that are emergent that are contingent as a result of these interactions. Because of this distinction in Buddhist scriptures one finds discussions of different avenues of reasoning or analysis when trying to understand the nature of the world or reality.

For example there is a discussion of what is called the Four Principles. One is the natural principle; the fact that things exist, cause leads to effects. Here there is an appreciation of a principle that is natural. One could almost say there is an acceptance of natural laws. Based on this natural principle then one can appreciate the principle of efficacy, given the natural principle it can produce certain given results. One can also talk about the principle of dependence. Given the natural principles and laws along with the principle of efficacy one sees a natural dependence between things and events, between causes and effects. Based on those three principals then Buddhist critical analysis talks about how one can apply various types of reasoning for analysis that would enable one to deepen one's understanding of the natural world. Therefore the fourth principle is the principle of valid proof that is based on the understanding of the three other principles one can accept the notion of given this, this must be the case; given that, that must be the case.

For a practicing Buddhist who is engaged in the Dharma it becomes important to appreciate these "facts" of the natural world. Once one has an appreciation of Four Principles then one is in a position to utilize that knowledge to live a life in accord with Dharma principles. Therefore one could say that one would be utilizing the principle of valid proof to avoid certain negative actions and enhance one's virtuous actions.

There is the natural world and at a certain point in the causal process karma comes into the picture and the question is in what manner does karma effect or interact with the natural causal law? Perhaps one can relate this to one's own personal experience. From one's own experience one knows that certain actions have a continuing effect later the very same day. A state of mind in the morning may have an impact on one's emotional sense of being in the evening. Even though an act is committed in the morning, an event that was finished, but its effects still linger on within one. I think this is the same principle that operates when one talks about karma and its effects even in the case of long-term karmic effects. It is on this basis that one can understand how karma creates

effects felt even after a long time after the act was committed. According to the Buddhist explanation the impact of karma can be felt in successive lifetimes as well.

Here I feel that unless one compliments the general explanation of the karmic process in mainstream Buddhist literature with Vajrayana literature one's understanding would not be comprehensive or complete. In the Vajrayana tradition there is an appreciation that not only the physical world but also the bodies of the sentient beings are composed of the same five elements; wind, fire, water, earth and space. Space here should be understood in terms of a vacuum, empty space rather than the technical meaning of the absence of obstruction. In the Vajrayana literature there is an understanding of the existence of external and internal elements and how at a very profound level they are related to each other. Through understanding that relationship one can try to understand in a deeper way the way in which karma effects the world.

As discussed earlier the fact that consciousness exists is a natural fact. The consciousness exists, that is it. Similarly in terms of the continuum of consciousness it is again a natural principle. Consciousness maintains its continuity. According to Buddhism there is an understanding that consciousness can not come into being from nowhere. It can not come into being without a cause. Also matter can not produce consciousness. Consciousness does not come out of matter. This is not to say that matter can not effect consciousness. It is a condition for the arising of consciousness. But in terms of the actual continuum of consciousness matter can not produce consciousness. When talking about consciousness, the nature of consciousness is mere luminosity, mere experience, a knowing faculty. That can not be produced from matter. Since consciousness can not come into being from no cause, nor can it come into being from a material cause, therefore consciousness must come from a ceaseless continuum. It is on this premise that Buddhism accepts the existence of beginningless former lives. Similarly one finds many individuals who have very clear and vivid memories of past lives.

When one talks about the origin of suffering, the sources of suffering, although they are karma and the delusions but the primary cause, the principal cause for the origin of suffering really is the delusions. Depending on different interpretations of the fundamental Buddhist doctrine of anatman, no-soul theory, it seems there is also differences in understanding the nature of the kleshas, the afflictive emotions and thoughts. For example certain states of mind or certain thoughts and emotions which according to the Madhyamika-Svatantrika school or Cittamatra Schools as being non-delusory but from the point of view of the Madhyamika-Prasangika view of anatman these thoughts and emotions would be seen as delusory. Of course this is a very complex point and would require a lot of study.

So now the important thing is that the afflictive emotions are the ultimate enemy or the source of suffering. Once an afflictive emotion develops within our mind it immediately destroys our peace of mind. Eventually it destroys our health. Also it destroys our friendships with other people. All the negative activities such as killing, bullying or cheating come out of the afflictive emotions. So this is the real enemy. That is the destroyer of our peace, destroyer of our fortune, including our health. So therefore that is the enemy, the real enemy. The external enemy today may be harmful to you but maybe the next day is very helpful. The inner enemy always remains as a destroyer. Moreover this enemy is always present no matter where you live. One can always put a distance from an external enemy like in 1959 when we escaped. This enemy whether in

Tibet or in the Potala or Dharamsala or here in London, wherever I go this enemy is there. Even somewhere in meditation during a visualization of a mandala, still in the very center of the mandala that enemy is still there. So this is the point now. We have to realize that. The real destroyer of our happiness is always there. (H.H. in English)

What do we do now? If there were no possibility to eliminate this then it would be better to forget and rely on alcohol, sex, all these things. Much better! If there is a possibility to eliminate that then I think we must take this good opportunity of a human being, human good heart, combine these two things. Try to reduce that and eventually eliminate. Therefore according to Buddhist teaching the human body is precious. Why? Because of human intellect and the shaping or changing our mind not only through emotion but also mainly through intelligence, through reasoning. There are two kinds of emotion. One emotion is without any reason such as fear, hatred or those things. Of course usually there are some reasons, "Oh that person is harming me". Through this one develops hatred. But deep down if one goes further there is not much reason. These emotions without proper reasons are the negative emotions. The other kind of emotion such as compassion, altruism, is a kind of emotion with reason. Further investigation can prove that they are something good, something necessary, and something useful. This kind of emotion, although a type of emotion, goes well with reason or intelligence. So the combination of intelligence and emotion is the way to change our inner world. So long as the basic suffering nature, the enemy is there, so long then we are under that enemy's control. No permanent happiness. Once you develop some kind of genuine desire to overcome this enemy that is the true aspiration to seek freedom, which is called renunciation in Buddhist language. This practice of analyzing our emotional level and inner world is the very important, key practice. (H.H. in English)

The scriptures say that so far as the desire to overcome obvious suffering, the suffering of suffering, is concerned, even animals have this natural desire. As far as the aspiration or desire to free oneself from the second level of suffering, the suffering of change, this is not unique to the Buddhist path. Many traditional Indian paths are similar in the quest for inner tranquility through samadhi. These practitioners also fully realize that the sensations like pleasure are ultimately unsatisfactory and of no use. The true aspiration to seek liberation from suffering or from samsara or moksha can only arise from recognition of the third level of suffering, the dukha of conditioning. As long as one remains under the domination or control of ignorance and the delusions, one is subject to suffering. There is no room for lasting joy and happiness. Based on this recognition one can truly develop a genuine desire to seek liberation or moksha.

Now the Third Noble Truth. What is nirvana? What is moksha? What is cessation? Is it something possible or not? This is the key question now. (H.H. in English)
The Third Noble Truth is the truth of cessation or moksha.

When talking about the truth of cessation, liberation or moksha, one could accept the existence of the possibility of attaining moksha because the Buddha talked about it in the scriptures. I do not think this is satisfactory. It may be useful here to reflect upon a point Aryadeva made in his *Four Hundred Verses on the Middle Way*. In it he argued that when talking about the ultimate nature of reality, emptiness, one must understand that emptiness is not something the understanding on which requires reliance on scriptural authority. It is something one can approach through critical analysis, through reasoning. The understanding of emptiness can arise through a process of reason. Therefore in

Buddhism there is an understanding that through phenomena evident to one's direct perception, one can proceed directly without the need for any sort of logical proof. There is a second category of phenomena, which although may not be obvious to us but one can infer them based on one's own direct perception of something. These are technically known as the category of the slightly obscured phenomena. They are not completely obscure because we can infer their existence through a reasoning process. Emptiness belongs to this category. Since emptiness belongs to this category, that emptiness can be approached through a reasoning process, one can infer the truth of emptiness. Therefore one must also accept moksha or liberation is something, which can be understood through this process as well.

As Nagarjuna said a true understanding of moksha should be based on an understanding of emptiness because moksha is nothing other than the total elimination or total cessation of delusion and suffering through the insight of emptiness. Understanding the concept of moksha is very much related to the Buddhist concept of emptiness. Since emptiness can be approached and understood through an inferential process similarly moksha can be approached and understood through a similar rational process.

Because of this intimate connection between the Buddhist concept of emptiness and of moksha, in the *Abhisamayalamkara*, a classic text written by Maitreya, when referring to the Third Noble Truth there is an extensive discussion of the sixteen types or classes of emptiness. The fact that moksha is an ultimate truth is very explicitly discussed in Candrakirti's writings. It seems whether or not one can accept the possibility of moksha depends on how well one understands the Buddhist concept of emptiness.

When one talks about the Buddhist concept of emptiness of course it is obvious one is talking about the absence of something, a form of negation. Similarly when talking about the Buddhist concept of anatman or no-self theory again one is talking about a form of negation or absence. Why this insistence on this absence, this negation? Pause for a moment and think about one's own experience. For example if one has a certain fear based on a suspicion that there might be something there, in order to dispel that fear one reflects that one might be projecting. Although it might lessen one's fear but it will not completely dispel it. If one instead develop a thought that this is pure illusion, there isn't anything here, and if one's rejection is that categorical it will have an immediate impact on dispelling one's fear.

If that is the case, what is being negated here? What is it empty of? What are we talking about being empty of? The scriptures say it is an absence of the object of negation. One is negating the object of this apprehension. This is not explanatory so one has to go further to try and understand what is the actual object of negation. One can see here that the key lies in one's understanding of what is meant by atman in the context of anatman. Depending on one's own philosophical interpretation of this Buddhist doctrine on anatman, there will be differences in the identification of what is being negated here. What one finds in the Buddhist literature is varying degrees of subtleties in one's identification of the atman, the object of negation. For example one level is where this atman is identified as a substantially real soul that exists within all of us. The negation of that substantially real, autonomous agent or eternal soul is the meaning of anatman. This is one interpretation of the principle of anatman.

There is also another interpretation of that doctrine which is the Cittamatra understanding where the fundamental ignorance is not so much the belief in a

substantially real, eternal soul principle but rather the acceptance or belief in the reality of the physical world. There is an understanding that the fundamental ignorance is the belief in the duality of mind and matter. The object to be negated in the context of anatman is this belief in the duality of mind and matter. This is another interpretation of the doctrine of anatman.

There is of course the Madhyamika-Svatantrika understanding of emptiness. Here there is an understanding that although things come into being as the result of causes and conditions and much of the status of existence is dependent on one's perceptions but still there is some sort of intrinsic reality to things and events. What is being negated here is independence of objects from perception. The negation of that is the emptiness.

From the point of view of the Madhyamika-Prasangika school even that is not the final meaning of the Buddhist teaching on anatman. From the Madhyamika-Prasangika's view so long as one has not deconstructed or dismantled the notion of any intrinsicness or any objectivity to the status of things and events, then one is still grasping at things as real, objectively existing, as enjoying some kind of independent status. What is being negated in the context of the doctrine of emptiness is the intrinsic reality, intrinsic existence or identity of things and events. The negation of that is the subtle meaning of the true meaning of the doctrine of emptiness. One sees that depending on one's own philosophical interpretation of the Buddhist teaching on anatman, one has varying or different understanding of what is to be negated.

What is common to all these four schools which have different interpretations on the Buddhist teaching on emptiness or anatman, is to bear in mind that while engaged in a task one needs to counteract one's grasping at atman, the self. It is also important to insure that one's negation does not defy the reality of the conventional world, the lived world of experience. The karmic world and karmic operations can not be destroyed by the negation. Causality, the world of causality should not be negated in the process of one's understanding emptiness.

In terms of arriving at a philosophical standpoint and form of analysis that would enable the individual to not only be thorough in negating atman and arriving at emptiness while at the same time ensuring the world of interdependence, the world of dependent origination and karma is not destroyed but on the contrary is reaffirmed, it would seem that the Madhyamika-Prasangika doctrine is the most successful. It may be useful here to reflect on a very important passage from Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way*, the *Madhyamikamulakarika*, where he states "That which is dependently originated, I call that empty". This in turn is dependently designated so the idea is that whatever is dependently originated is empty in the ultimate sense and this empty phenomena is dependently designated.

The fact that things and events are dependently designated implies that they are not non-existent, they are not mere nothingness. What is found here is the way in which the understanding of pratyasamutpada, dependent origination, and the understanding of emptiness together enables the individual to tread the middle way thus avoiding the extremes of absolutism and nihilism. This Madhyamika expression dependently designated has a deep significance as the first part of the expression (dependently) implies that things and events come into being by dependence on other factors. This means they do not possess independent existence, they do not possess some sort of autonomous, absolute status of existence. They come into being only as the result of

dependence upon causes and conditions. The first part of that expression negates absolutism. The second part of the expression, which is designated, implies that they are not mere nothingness, they are not non-existent. They do exist. This part of the expression insures that the reality of the phenomenal world is not destroyed.

Therefore Buddhapalita stated in his *Commentary on Madhyamikamulakarika* that if things and events exist with independent and substantial status, come into existence without dependence on other factors, then why are the designations dependent? Why is there this dependent designation, inter-related designation? Related to this point, it seems from speaking with various physicists, I was told according to quantum mechanics there are problems in postulating this very notion of reality. Even reality as a concept is becoming a problem. For me what this points towards is the difficulty of finding an essence when one searches into the essence of things.

However if one jumps to the other extreme and say that this is pure illusion and everything is just mere projection of mind, then one falls into the trap where the Cittamatrins fell which is total mentalism. Things do not possess intrinsic reality, do not possess objective, independent and substantial status yet at the same time one is not happy with the conclusion that everything is a mere projection of the mind, where is the middle way? Madhyamikas here say that things and events come into being purely as the result of the aggregation of many factors. It is on the basis of this aggregation of causes and conditions that one imputes identity upon that aggregation.

End of third session

We were talking about emptiness during the last session. When it comes to the exposition of the Buddhist doctrine of emptiness one finds in the literature there are various forms of reasoning to arrive at an understanding of emptiness. Among all the different forms of reasoning, the reasoning based on an understanding of dependent origination of all things is considered to be the most effective. In order to develop the most profound understanding of the meaning of the Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination or pratyasamutpada, the works of Buddhapalita and Candrakirti seem to be very critical, very important.

Much of my own understanding and the presentation here on the topics of dependent origination and emptiness is based on Lama Tsong Khapa's exposition and presentation of these topics. Lama Tsong Khapa's own presentation is very much based on the reading of Nagarjuna by Candrakirti and Buddhapalita. This is so much so that almost every crucial point in Lama Tsong Khapa's understanding of these concepts is substantiated by referring to the works of Buddhapalita and the various commentaries by Candrakirti.

When I am studying Nagarjuna's *Madhyamikamulakarika* I combine the twenty-third chapter dealing with the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination with the eighteenth chapter which deals with the Buddhist understanding of anatman. The eighteenth chapter principally deals with the understanding of the Buddhist doctrine of no-soul or no-self and how grasping at such an atman, the eternal principle, binds one to unenlightened existence. Elimination or overcoming of this grasping leads to liberation. The point of the eighteenth chapter is to underline the critical importance of the need to gain insight into emptiness.

The study of these two chapters is then combined with the twenty-fourth chapter in which Nagarjuna anticipates various objections from the Realist Buddhist schools. The central point of their objections is that if there is no intrinsic reality, if there is no intrinsic existence or identity to things and events then there is nothing. Therefore there could not be the Four Noble Truths. If there were no Four Noble Truths there can not be the Three Jewels. If there are no Three Jewels there can not be the Path therefore there can not be a path to enlightenment. Nagarjuna responded by reversing the criticism towards them. He stated that on the contrary if things existed with intrinsic identity or reality then the consequences laid to him would follow. If things did possess intrinsic reality then there can not be the Four Noble Truths; they could not be causal processes. The cause could not produce effects and so on. The central message that comes from the twenty-fourth chapter is demonstrate that what Nagarjuna meant by emptiness is not a mere nothingness, not a mere non-existence. His emptiness should be understood in terms of the interdependent nature of reality. Things are devoid of independent existence and they are characterized by dependent origination. It is the very fact of their dependent nature that they are absent of independent existence.

One of the recent Amdo masters of Tibetan Buddhism from the turn of the century articulated this point beautifully in verse. He said that empty here in this context does not mean absence of functionality. What then is the meaning of emptiness? It is the emptiness of real existence or absolute existence. Dependently originated does not entail intrinsic reality or identity. What it does entail is an illusion-like phenomenal reality.

When one understands the meaning of emptiness and dependent origination then one will be able to posit simultaneously within one locus the idea of emptiness and appearance without contradiction. Similarly the same master said that it is common to all philosophical schools to try to describe their own position as avoiding the extremes of absolutism by some form of emptiness and nihilism by some level of phenomenal reality. It is only when one reverses the process that one will be able to overcome all forms of clinging. This is the Madhyamika-Prasangika schools position of course. From the point of view of Madhyamika-Prasangika it is the appearance that liberates one from grasping to absolutism and it is emptiness, once one understands the true meaning of emptiness, that liberates one from falling into nihilism.

Earlier I spoke about there being a difference even within the Madhyamika School with two different understandings of the concept of emptiness. I spoke about how the Madhyamika-Svatantrika view differed from the Madhyamika-Prasangika view. The basis for accepting this difference comes from Bhavaviveka's writing where he, one of the chief disciples of Nagarjuna, subjected the Buddhist Realist Schools to a very critical examination and argumentation. At the same time he also criticizes Buddhapalita's reading of Nagarjuna. Through these two different criticisms directed at two different schools one can see that Bhavaviveka's position emerges from these critical processes. A sense of his position is that although absolute existence is denied, there is an acceptance of some form of intrinsic reality, objective reality to things and events. This is totally rejected by the Madhyamika-Prasangika masters like Candrakirti.

Although Candrakirti, Buddhapalita and Bhavaviveka are all great disciples of Nagarjuna, we feel that there is a substantial philosophical difference in their understanding of Nagarjuna's philosophy of emptiness. Because of this difference Tibetan Buddhist scholars make two divisions within the Madhyamika School and give

them the labels Madhyamika-Svatantrika and Madhyamika-Prasangika Schools. One of the bases for such a distinction is that there is a large difference between their schools adoption of methodology. In the Madhyamika-Prasangika School there is a much greater emphasis on using what is called the consequentialist style of reasoning which is more like *reductio ad absurdum*. Here one is not using reason to affirm something but rather one is concerned more with showing internal inconsistencies within an opponent's viewpoint. Whereas Madhyamika-Svatantrika tends to use much more syllogistic type of reasoning to establish some form of a position.

A fundamental difference between Bhavaviveka and Candrakirti is how one's sensory perceptions misperceive material objects. To Bhavaviveka when a visual perception arises as far as the appearance of the objective entity is concerned, there is an element of validity there. Bhavaviveka accepts that things do possess a degree of objectivity, which is then projected on to the perception. This is totally rejected by the Madhyamika-Prasangika School of Candrakirti. On this basis it is known that the central difference between the two Madhyamika schools is whether or not one accepts any idea or intrinsicness.

The reason why the understanding of this subtle point is important is that if one were to relate this point to one's own personal experience then one can see that when strong emotions arise, say attachment, underlying the emotion response there is an assumption that something objective or real is "out there". One clings to and projects on to the object desirability or undesirability, something attractive or unattractive and based on the projected qualities, one feels either attraction or repulsion. Underlying this strong emotional response is an assumption that there is something out there, some kind of objective reality, an objective entity with an absolute status. However if through one's understanding of emptiness one realizes that there is no intrinsic reality to things and events then this will automatically give one insight that the strong emotion no matter how real and strong they seem, they are baseless. They have no valid ground, no valid basis. Once one understands that the strong emotions are based on a fundamental misknowledge or misconception then they themselves become baseless and untenable. Whereas if one's understanding of emptiness is not thorough in the sense that it hasn't succeeded in negating any notion of intrinsicness then one will feel that the strong emotion is valid or justified.

Once one has developed a certain understanding of emptiness be it intellectual, one will have a certain outlook or orientation towards things and events. One can then compare this to one's own natural responses to events or objects and see how to a very large extent often one projects qualities on the world. One specially realizes that much of the strong emotions one feels arise from an assumption that is unreal and baseless. Through this way one may be able to experientially gain some kind of sense that there is a gap, a disparity between the way one perceives things and the way they really are.

From all of this the conclusion one can draw is the fact that much of one's strong emotions, the emotions that afflict one's mind, arise from a fundamental state of confusion. This confusion tends to apprehend things as real, things as intrinsically existent or independent. One knows that these afflictive emotions and thoughts have no valid support, either in one's experience, in reality or in reason. In contrast one's insight into the emptiness of things is not only grounded in reason but is also grounded in one's experience. There is a valid support. Not only this but one's understanding of emptiness

and one's grasping at things as real and intrinsic are directly opposite of each other. One harms the other, one destroys the other. Given that they are both opposite, opposing forces, given that one lacks any valid support or grounding whereas the other has valid grounding in one's experience and in reason, one conclusion to be drawn is that the more one develops an understanding of emptiness the greater the power of that insight becomes. This understanding can become deepened and enhanced. The more one sees through the deception of these emotions the weaker the force of the emotions becomes. The conclusion to be drawn is that the strong afflictive emotions and thoughts and their basis which is the fundamental ignorance are something that can be minimized and weakened. Whereas the opposite forces, the insight into emptiness, can be enhanced.

Through one's reflections so far, one has arrived at a point where one can conceivably accept that the delusions, the afflictive emotions, and also their basis, which is the fundamental ignorance, are something one can weaken their force. The question now remains whether it is possible at all to completely eliminate, eradicate and root from one's mind or psyche. Here I feel that perhaps reflecting upon some of the points made in Maitreya's *Uttaratantra*, *The Sublime Continuum* may be very critical. According to this text there is an understanding that so far as the potential for knowing is concerned, it is intrinsic to one's consciousness. It is something inherent, a natural quality of one's mind. Whereas all the various afflictions of the mind, the pollutants, are not an essential part of one's mind. They are separable from the essential nature of the mind. They are adventitious, *glo bur gyi dri ma*.

When one talks about gaining the perfect wisdom of a Buddha, one should not have a notion that one is in some sense creating qualities that are not present and come from somewhere outside. Rather one should see it more in terms of a potential that has been realized. The pollutants of the mind come in the way of the natural expression of the potential that is already inherent in one's consciousness. It is as if the capacity to know without obstruction is here in one's consciousness, in one's psyche. It is the pollutants that afflict one's mind that in some sense obscures or hinders one's potential to express or be developed fully. Once one's understanding of the nature of the mind is informed by the concept of the essential nature of the mind as pure luminosity, mere experience or the capacity to know then by understanding that all the pollutants of the mind are able to be removed, then one can see the idea of the total eradication or elimination of the pollutants.

This is how one can conceptualize the possibility of obtaining moksha, how the afflictions of the mind can be removed and how liberation can be obtained. In the scriptures such moksha or state of liberation is characterized in terms of four qualities or four features. First is true cessation as one has removed all afflictions from one's continuum. It is described as true peace because it is a state of total tranquility where the individual has obtained total freedom from all the pollutants of the mind. It is also described as totally satisfying because one has reached a state of ultimate satisfaction. Finally is also described as the definite emergence as one has definitely emerged from the unenlightened process.

If that kind of goal is something very possible then how does one achieve this? Now this question becomes very important. (H.H. in English) This takes us to the Fourth Noble Truth, the True Path. When one talks about true paths leading to liberation or moksha according to the Madhyamika explanation, the true path should be understood in

terms of a direct, intuitive realization of emptiness. This is the True Path. This is the path, this direct, intuitive realization of emptiness that directly leads to the attainment of cessation.

In order to attain such a direct, intuitive realization of emptiness one must have the basis, which is a single-pointed meditative, experiential knowledge of emptiness. When the individual attains that knowledge of emptiness experientially through meditation that is said to be the beginning of the Path of Linking or Preparation. At the point where the individual has gained direct, intuitive realization of emptiness, it is said to be the Path of Seeing. However the experiential knowledge of emptiness derived from meditative practices in turn must be based on an initial, intellectual inferential understanding or cognition of emptiness. Without this there is no possibility of attaining a meditatively based experience of emptiness. The initial stage of developing the inferential cognition of emptiness is part of what is known as the Path of Accumulation. The threshold of the Path of Accumulation is the point where the individual practitioner has gained a genuine aspiration to attain liberation. This is the beginning of the path.

However in order to prepare oneself to embark on such a path, the Path of Accumulation or Linking, one must prepare the groundwork. One is now talking about practices at the beginning stage, the initial stage. The most important practice here is the Three Higher Trainings; trainings in morality, meditation and wisdom or insight. In the scriptures when the actual processes or the transition from one stage to another is described it is often discussed in terms of meditative experience.

It is important here to understand that the actual path on which the individual travels is the progressive and deepening knowledge and realization of emptiness. This is known as the wisdom aspect of the path. This wisdom realizing emptiness however must be within the context where there is a union or combination of single-pointedness of the mind and penetrative insight. This is the union of samatha and vipasyana. The true insight into emptiness must be in terms of a union of samatha and vipasyana. However in order to develop such true insight into emptiness where there is a union of the two of course one requires first to develop samatha, the single-pointedness of the mind which will then allow one to channel one's energy and concentration. Therefore single-pointedness of the mind or samatha training becomes key. In order for the individual to have a successful training in samatha two factors are very important. These are application of mindfulness and the application of introspection or mental alertness. Training in these two will be successful only if one's single-pointedness of the mind is based on an ethically sound, disciplined way of life. One is of course talking about the importance of morality. This is how the Three Trainings are linked with each other.

All the practices of the Three Higher Trainings sometimes are elaborated in the Buddhist scriptures as the Thirty-seven Aspects of the Path to Enlightenment. All of these practices are common to both the Sravakayana and the Bodhisattvayana.

To sum up, if one's understanding of the Four Noble Truths arises from such deep reflections then one will gain a deep admiration towards the Dharma which is the true refuge. One will also develop a conviction in the possibility of actualizing the Dharma within oneself. Once one has such conviction then one will be able to develop a genuine admiration of the Buddha, the master who showed the Dharma, the Path. If one is able to do this then one will be able to develop a deep admiration towards the Sangha, the Sangha members who are one's spiritual companions on the Path. They are all engaged in

this ultimate quest to actualize the Dharma or realize the Dharma within themselves. Through this way if one's understanding of the Three Jewels based on such a profound understanding of the Four Noble Truths then when one thinks about the Three Jewels one will feel a renewed freshness. The three objects of refuge come alive. All of this explanation is to show what is meant by going for refuge in the Three Jewels.

Based on this understanding of taking refuge, we now look at another important aspect of Buddhism where there is an understanding that the foundation of the entire teaching of the Buddha is compassion. Compassion is the foundation of Buddha's teaching. The practice of enhancing one's heart, developing an altruistic mind, is aimed at deepening one's understanding of compassion and enhancing the compassionate potential that exists within oneself.

Based on such profound compassion then one can develop the altruistic aspiration to seek enlightenment for the benefit of all. Here one is talking about the generation of bodhicitta. What is meant by bodhicitta? In Maitreya's *Abhisamayalamkara* bodhicitta or this altruistic aspiration to attain enlightenment for the sake of others is described as having two motivating factors. One is genuine compassion towards all sentient beings. The second is the recognition of the need to attain full enlightenment in order to fulfill the well being, the welfare of other sentient beings.

In order to develop such bodhicitta, this altruistic mind, one needs to develop a sense of responsibility, not just mere compassion towards others but compassion with a sense of responsibility that one will take upon oneself the task to help others. This kind of sense of responsibility can only arise if one has generated genuine compassion, spontaneously arisen, which pervades all sentient beings. This is a universal compassion; it is not partial but rather universal towards all sentient beings. Such compassion is called Great Compassion, mahakaruna, to distinguish it from ordinary compassion.

However such compassion can only arise if one first of all has a genuine insight into the dukha-nature, the nature of suffering of oneself and other sentient beings. There is a true recognition of one's state of being as suffering. Not only this but also there should be a genuine empathy or connectedness with others without which compassion can not arise. In order to have genuine compassion one needs not only the realization of the suffering nature but also a sense of connectedness with other sentient beings, a natural empathy.

As far as gaining insight into the suffering nature is concerned, reflection on the First Noble Truth, the truth of suffering, will assist one into deepening one's insight into suffering. Not only this but for an altruistic practitioner it is important to realize that attaining individual liberation alone is not adequate. Not only is it individualistic but also even from the point of view of one's own perfectibility, gaining liberation or moksha alone is not full enlightenment. It is not a state of full awakening.

A crucial requirement here is that in order to develop genuine compassion one needs to have a natural empathy and sense of connectedness or closeness with all other sentient beings. One of the techniques described in the Buddhist scriptures to enhance this natural empathy towards others is to develop the recognition that all sentient beings have been one's mothers, if not one's mother then someone who is dearest to one and then extend that perception to all sentient beings. Through this way one can develop a spontaneous, natural empathy with others.

However such natural empathy towards all sentient beings can not arise if one has fluctuating emotions towards others which are based on discrimination, viewing some as enemies, some as friends. This fluctuating emotion based on discrimination first has to be overcome. Therefore the practice of equanimity towards all becomes crucial.

There is a different technique described in Santideva's *Bodhicaryavatara, Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. In it he explains a way of cultivating genuine empathy towards others, not so much based on the recognition of others as one's dearest but rather as a way of developing equality of oneself with others. Just as one wishes to be happy and overcome suffering, others too have a similar natural desire and right to be happy and overcome suffering. One develops that sense of equality then reverses perspectives putting others in one's place and then relating to them as more dear than oneself. This kind of process of training is another technique for cultivating a natural empathy or connectedness towards others.

According to the Tibetan meditative tradition these two different techniques are combined and then meditated upon. The custom is that once as the result of one's reflection and practice if one gains even a simulated experience of this altruistic mind of compassion one then stabilizes that or reinforces it through participating in a ceremony. In this ceremony one explicitly generates bodhicitta. This for a bodhisattva should then be followed by developing a keen desire to engage in the bodhisattva ideals, activities of a bodhisattva. Once an individual has successfully developed a keen interest and wish to engage in the bodhisattva activities of helping other sentient beings, then according to the tradition such a person must take Bodhisattva Vows from this point.

The Bodhisattva ideals or activities could be summed up in what is called the Three Precepts. One is the precept of refraining from negative actions. The second one is the precept of consciously or deliberately engaging in positive or virtuous actions. The third one is the precept of helping others. From the point of view of how causal practices lead to a resultant state, bodhisattva practices sometimes also are described in terms of the Two Accumulations, the Accumulation of Merit and the Accumulation of Wisdom. The accumulation of merit and wisdom are the two elements of the union of method and wisdom. On the Buddhist path these two aspects of the fundamental aspect of the path should always be united, they should not be separated.

It is on the practice of unifying method and wisdom where the profundity and sophistication of the Tantric or Vajrayana practices comes forth. To put it very briefly one of the unique features of the union of method and wisdom in the Vajrayana teachings is that there the practitioner first subjects all their perceptions of self and the environment into an understanding of emptiness, dissolves everything into emptiness. This very cognition or understanding of emptiness is then visualized as the form of a meditational deity. Of course this is at the imaginative level initially. Once one has this visualization of the deity, one again reflects upon the non-substantial or empty nature of the deity. What is found here is that complete within one instance of cognition both aspects of method and wisdom are together. There is a visualization of a deity yet at the same time there is an understanding or comprehension of the empty nature of the deity. Within one single instance of a cognitive act, one has both the method and wisdom complete.

Within the Vajrayana tradition, principally speaking there are four classes of Tantra. In the first two classes of Tantra there is no involvement of taking Tantric or Vajrayana Vows. It is in Yoga Tantra and Highest Yoga Tantra, Anuttarayogatantra

where the practitioner takes Tantric Vows. In the Anuttarayogatantra, Highest Yoga Tantra, there are various meditative practices that are aimed at utilizing various physiological elements such as visualizing the energy channels, the energies that flow in the channels and the subtle drops. The point is that in all of these various types of meditation the key is the meditation on bodhicitta, the altruistic aspiration, and insight into emptiness. Without these two factors, no practice can be considered Buddhist practice. Even the Tantric practices as long as they are divorced from or devoid of bodhicitta and the understanding of emptiness, they are not even Buddhist practices.

However in very reliable and authentic texts belonging to Yoga Tantra, there is an understanding that the Vajrayana path could also be based on the philosophical understanding of emptiness of the Cittamatra School as well, not necessarily the Madhyamika. I feel however that in order to have a comprehensive practice of Tantra, in order to obtain the full realization of the Vajrayana path, one needs the insight of emptiness based on the Madhyamika understanding.

Just as in one of the questions the point was raised about the difficulty of continuing to practice tantra, I think it is very true that so long as one is not able to establish a firm grounding in the basic practices of the Buddhadharmas even the supposedly profound practices of the Vajrayana will have no effect. Therefore the point is that it is important to understand that for a practicing Buddhist, developing an understanding and meditation on the Four Noble Truths is crucial. Meditation as a part of one's practice becomes very critical. When talking about meditation it is important to bear in mind that one's meditation should contain both elements of meditation, single-pointedness and analytic or penetrative.

Another important factor is determination. You should not think these developments can take place in a few days or few years. We must understand that. These developments even may take eons. So you see our determination, if you consider yourself a Buddhist and want to really practice the Buddhadharmas then right from the beginning you must make up your mind that it doesn't matter if it takes millions of billions of eons. Doesn't matter. After all what is the purpose of our life? The meaning of existence? I think to utilize something positive. Then even if days, months or eons it is meaningful. If you are really wasting the purpose of our life then even one day too long! (H.H. in English)

So once you determine, once you make up your mind, some kind of firm determination and clear objective then time is not important. Like Santideva said in one of his prayers "So long as space remain, So long as sentient beings' suffering remain, I will remain in order to serve". That sentence really gives me some kind of inner strength and inspiration. As I mentioned before people want something quickest or best or something then I think also cheapest. I think this is wrong. That I would like to share with you. (H.H. in English)

So that's why I myself always recite some mantra or some visualization of certain mandalas but my daily practice, although my practice is very poor, my main emphasis is on these Four Noble Truths, bodhicitta and karuna. That is really I feel something practical. Through these practices you will get some practical benefit. Realization of big deities sometimes I think we are cheating ourselves. Almost like deceiving oneself. Therefore I think we must practice step by step with patience and determination. Once you are involved or dedicated or determined to practice then some improvement you can see year by year or at least decade by decade. Then you can see "Oh at least there is some

change, some improvement!” You can see. Once you see that it also gives you some kind of new encouragement. So you see, change is not easy, not easy. (H.H. in English)

So as Buddhist brothers and sisters that is my talk. Now the important thing is, if you consider yourself a Buddhist then please implement. Should not remain on just an intellectual level. Practice or teaching must be part of our life. Not only Buddhist but other practitioner or believer say Christian or Moslem or Jews or whatever your faith. If you accept your faith then it must be part of your life. It is not sufficient to just on Sunday say attend church and remain like that. Few moments then outside nothing there. That is not sufficient. Whether you are physically in your cathedral or not I think the teaching of your own religion must be in your heart always. That is very important. Then you get experience of real value. Otherwise just a knowledge here (points to head). (H.H. in English)

When you face some real problem what helps? Once the teachings become a part of your life then when real problems come, the teachings give you inner strength. Finally when we become older, old age, and incurable illness and finally death comes, then the practice really gives you some kind of inner guarantee. So that is important. After all death is a part of our life, nothing sustains. Sooner or later we have to pass death’s main gate, we have to pass through that way. Whether there is a next life or not, at that time peace of mind is a very crucial factor. How to achieve peace of mind at that moment? If you have some experience in yourself then that will provide some kind of inner strength. No one else, no deities, no gurus, no other can provide. That is why Buddha says you are your own master. That is very important. Thank you. (H.H. in English)